

Urge Surfing/ Distress Tolerance

Learn how to manage overwhelming urges by observing them without acting on them, allowing them to rise and fall like a wave.

What is Urge Surfing?

Urge surfing involves experiencing the urge (or craving) to engage in a certain behavior, but instead of acting on it, you practice observing and experiencing it as it naturally intensifies and then fades. It is like riding the wave of the urge without giving in to it. The goal is to build tolerance to discomfort and develop control over your actions.

1. Identify the Urge

What is the urge you're feeling? (e.g., urge to self-harm, overeat, drink, etc.)

2. Rate the Intensity - On a scale of 1-10, how strong is the urge right now?

Intensity: ____

3. Describe the Urge

Physical sensations (e.g., tight chest, fast heartbeat)

Thoughts (e.g., "I can't resist," "I need this")

Emotions (e.g., anxiety, frustration)

4. Ride the Wave

Breathe deeply and focus on your breath.

Observe the urge rise and fall, without acting on it.

Notice the intensity change over time.

What happens to the intensity of the urge?

5. Distract or Redirect

Try distracting yourself or doing something different (e.g., walk, call a friend, listen to music).

What distractions help you cope?

6. Reflect

How do you feel now? (e.g., relieved, calm)

What helped you manage the urge?

7. Self-Compassion

Write a self-compassionate statement: (e.g., "I'm doing my best, and this urge will pass.")

Reminder:

Urges are temporary and can be managed with practice.

Keep riding the wave!

- **Peak:** The urge hits its max and may feel impossible to overcome.

- **Rise:** the urge grows (gradual or rapid)

- **Trigger:** the urge is triggered.

- **Fall:** The urge fades as intensity declines.

Stages of the Urge